

## Kansas Department of Labor

### Special Edition: Update on EUC deadline and switching to State Extended Benefits (7/14/10)

**Jonathan:** Welcome to a special edition of *Questions from Claimants*, with an important update on the Emergency Unemployment Compensation deadline. I'm Jonathan Larance.

It's been over a month since the deadline to apply for federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation benefits has passed. While the nation waits for Congress to extend this deadline, we know there are many of you with questions about the status of your claim and what to do while you're waiting. To get your questions answered I spoke with Kathy Toelkes, Director of Communications for the Kansas Department of Labor.

Kathy, thanks for joining us today.

**Kathy:** Thanks for having me.

**Jonathan:** So Kathy, what is the current status of the benefits program in Kansas?

**Kathy:** Currently, there are three benefit programs operating in Kansas. There are the regular state unemployment benefits and then the federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation or EUC benefits and the State Extended Benefits program. Unfortunately, not all of those benefits are available to Kansans at this time. Benefits through the EUC program, new benefits, are not available to Kansans right now. That means anybody who had a new claim for Tier I EUC that was effective May 23 or after, we can't pay benefits on those claims, and also for Tiers I, I'm sorry, Tiers II or III that were effective after May 29 we're unable to pay benefits on those claims at this time as well, due to that deadline extension not being extended.

**Jonathan:** So what you are saying, just to reiterate, is that because the EUC deadline has yet to be passed, claimants cannot claim EUC benefits if they're exhausting their regular benefits and, if they're already in the EUC program, they can't move onto the next tier, say they can't go from Tier I to Tier II, correct?

**Kathy:** That's correct.

**Jonathan:** Okay, so what is KDOL doing for the claimants that can no longer claim EUC benefits?

**Kathy:** When Congress failed to act to extend that deadline by May 28, and then were recessing for the Memorial Day recess, KDOL put new applications for EUC on hold, anticipating quick action by Congress when they returned to session to act to extend that deadline. Unfortunately, that legislation continues to be delayed and so we have now moved to shift all of those who have had EUC applications pending into the State Extended Benefits program.

**Jonathan:** So the State Extended program is still available for people, correct?

**Kathy:** Yes, Kansas is still eligible to offer State Extended Benefits, which become available during periods of high unemployment on a state-by-state basis. And in Kansas our seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate has been at 6.5 percent or more for three consecutive months, and that keeps us triggered onto the program.

Until Congress is able to pass an extension of the EUC application deadline, individuals who are currently receiving regular state unemployment benefits will be sent applications for the State Extended Benefits program once those regular benefits have exhausted. And the same will happen for individuals who are

currently receiving EUC benefits in any of the three tiers—they will receive State Extended Benefits applications as those current benefits exhaust.

**Jonathan:** So, how many weeks of benefits are available at this time?

**Kathy:** For someone who was filing an initial claim for unemployment benefits today, there would be 39 weeks, potentially, available in unemployment benefits. That includes 26 weeks in the regular state unemployment benefits program and an additional, up to 13 weeks of benefits in the state extended benefits program. If Congress acts to pass an extension of the EUC application deadline, then unemployed Kansans will be able to apply for the additional 47 weeks of benefits that are available through the three tiers in the EUC program.

**Jonathan:** So Kathy, what is the status of claimants' EB applications at this time?

**Kathy:** Well, we started sending EB applications to claimants last month and processing of those applications began the week of June 28. The applications are being processed in the order that they are received and as of last Friday, July 9, we were processing applications that were received on July 7. My understanding is we received a large number of applications on July 7, so we may be processing those for a little while, but we will keep regular updates on our website, [www.GetKansasBenefits.com](http://www.GetKansasBenefits.com), that will let claimants know the receipt date of the applications currently being processed and that's important because we know a lot of people are anxious, wanting to know when they're going to start receiving their benefits, and so we are receiving a lot of phone calls into our contact center to ask about the status of their EB claims. And because that is a manual process, they're sending us paper applications that are manually keyed into the system, until we reach a point that we've begun processing their application we can't tell them the status because it would involve going through stacks of paper to find where theirs fell. So, if they can look on our website and look for that receipt date of the applications being processed, that will give them an idea of where their application is at this time.

**Jonathan:** Okay, good, thank you for that advice. How many EB applications are currently waiting this processing?

**Kathy:** Well, we mailed out over 7,000 EB applications last month, so we have quite a few, as you can imagine. Most of those are coming in all at once and as I said it's a manual process, so there is a bit of a backlog of these applications. And we expect that it could take up to four weeks to work our way through that full backlog.

**Jonathan:** While they're waiting for their application to be processed and they're on hold and they're filling their weekly claims and then they get approved, will they get those payments retroactive?

**Kathy:** Yes, the payments will be made from the point that they exhausted their last benefit program, so it's very important that the claimants to continue filling their weekly claims because that makes it much easier for us to get those back, those retroactive benefits to them more quickly. So they will receive benefits for any of the weeks in which they were eligible and for which they claimed.

**Jonathan:** So Kathy, if the EUC deadline passes, will claimants be able to start receiving benefits again and when will that be?

**Kathy:** If Congress is able to pass an extension of the application deadline for the EUC program, then claimants who have already moved into the State Extended Benefits program and are receiving those benefits, they'll need to exhaust those State Extended Benefits before they move back into the EUC program. But if we haven't yet processed their application for the State Extended Benefits they can move right into the next available tier of EUC.

**Jonathan:** Now Kathy, what should I do while I wait for my claim to be processed? What advice do you have for me?

**Kathy:** If you're not receiving benefits right now and you are waiting on your EB application to be processed, again it is very important that you continue to file your weekly claims. As we just mentioned the pay for those weeks since you exhausted your last benefits and while you were waiting for the State Extended Benefits application to be processed, we can pay you for those if you were eligible and if you filed, so keep filing those weekly claims. And as I mentioned, we're keeping updates about both our processing for State Extended Benefits, as well as progress on passing a deadline extension for the EUC program on our website. That's at [www.GetKansasBenefits.com](http://www.GetKansasBenefits.com) and both of those updates will be located in the latest updates section that is right at the top of the page.

**Jonathan:** Kathy, thank you so much for sitting down and talking with me today about this very important EUC deadline.

**Kathy:** Thank you, Jonathan.

**Jonathan:** That's it for this special edition of *Questions from Claimants*. We hope this answers your questions about the EUC deadline extension. For the latest news and updates about the EUC program and more, go to [www.GetKansasBenefits.com](http://www.GetKansasBenefits.com).

Remember, if you have general questions about the Kansas Unemployment process, e-mail us at [podcast@dol.ks.gov](mailto:podcast@dol.ks.gov). For security reasons, we can't answer specific questions about your claim, but we may be able to answer general questions in an upcoming episode.

I'm Jonathan Larance. Thanks for listening.